

## Violence and Victimization

There is a pervasive form of violence that occurs not in the streets of the Nation's communities, but behind closed doors. The National Violence Against Women Survey revealed that 1 out of 6 women in the United States has been the victim of an attempted or completed sexual assault during her lifetime. Recent NIJ research has helped shed light on the problems of intimate partner violence and sexual violence, documenting the extent of these problems and offering criminal justice strategies for effective response. NIJ bolstered its research agenda in 2003 in the areas of sexual violence and batterers and their victims with research awards to continue the examination of these issues and to inform the criminal justice community about appropriate and effective responses.

### Do batterer intervention programs work? Two studies

For more than a decade, courts have been sending some convicted batterers to intervention programs rather than to prison. But do these programs work? Two

studies in Florida and New York tested the most common type of batterer intervention. Their findings raise serious questions about the effectiveness of these programs.

What did the researchers find? Batterer intervention programs do not change batterers' attitudes and may have only minor effects on behavior, according to these studies. The Florida study found no significant differences between those who had treatment and those who did not as to whether they battered again or in their attitudes toward domestic violence. The study did find an apparent relationship between whether an offender was employed or owned a house and whether he reoffended: Those with the most to lose were the least likely to reoffend. In New York, batterers in a 26-week program were less likely to reoffend than those in an 8-week program, but neither group showed any change in attitude toward women or domestic violence.

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#### For more information:

- *Batterer Intervention Programs: Where Do We Go From Here?* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, September 2003 (NCJ 195079), <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/pubs-sum/195079.htm>.
- *Do Batterer Intervention Programs Work? Two Studies*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, September 2003 (NCJ 200331), <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/pubs-sum/200331.htm>.

**The Honolulu Star-Bulletin** cited NIJ statistics in an October 1, 2003, article announcing Hawaii Attorney General Mark Bennett's kickoff of a statewide campaign to respond to incidents of stalking. The *Bulletin* noted that, nationally, 1 out of 12 women and 1 out of 45 men will be stalked sometime in their lives, with a majority of the victims being stalked by someone they know (such as a former spouse or intimate partner). From <http://www.Starbulletin.com>

### Helping victims with special needs

Many crime victims possess physical or cultural characteristics that may present barriers for law enforcement personnel attempting to assist them.

NIJ awarded approximately \$200,000 to the Council on Crime & Justice in 2003 to conduct an exploratory investigation into the needs and help-seeking behaviors of sexual violence victims in the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities. This study promises to inform law enforcement agencies on how to enhance their responsiveness to victims from these vulnerable communities. An auditing protocol for law enforcement agencies is expected to result from the study.

NIJ awarded \$276,000 to the National Center for State Courts to conduct a national survey of accessibility to civil protection for battered women with limited English proficiency. The study has the potential to inform criminal justice officials and practitioners about the capacity of courts to meet the language needs of populations with limited English proficiency, and to provide promising practices for courts to model their response to these victims, thus enhancing the quality of their experience when they seek assistance from the civil system.

### Specialized care for victims and treatment for offenders

A Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) and Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) can provide not only specialized attention for victims but also specialized

collection of forensic evidence. NIJ awarded \$275,000 to the American Prosecutors Research Institute in 2003 to examine the impact of SANE/SART interventions on rates of arrest, prosecution, and conviction, as well as frequency of guilty pleas, charges at case disposition, and sentencing. Findings from this study are expected to influence the expansion of SANE/SART programs to jurisdictions where they currently do not exist as well as enhance existing programs.

NIJ also awarded a grant of \$435,000 to the Indiana University of Pennsylvania to examine the effects of mental health treatment as a supplement to a batterer intervention program. The study will compare the effects on a group that receives the treatment with a group that does not receive it. Both groups will be followed for 12 months to track subsequent intimate partner violence. This research has the potential to inform the field of professionals working on batterer intervention programs in general and court and probation practitioners in particular.

### Sharing data on domestic violence

Through an NIJ-sponsored initiative, some 40 Federal, State, county, and local law enforcement agencies in the San Diego area are sharing information about domestic violence cases as a means of combating the crime. The San Diego County Automated Regional Justice Information System (ARJIS) integrates more than 2,500 workstations, laptops, and printers throughout San Diego County. ARJIS has more than 10,000 authorized registered

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users generating more than 35,000 transactions daily. ARJIS is used for tactical analysis, investigations, statistical information, and crime analysis. Officers can submit queries and request photos from wireless-equipped PDA's (personal digital assistants) in the field. Through a secure intranet connection, ARJIS participants can access data on the region's crime cases, arrests, citations, field interviews, traffic accidents, fraudulent documents, photographs, gang information, and stolen property.

The ARJIS domestic violence database contains information about more than one million individuals; 2,500 cases are actively monitored, with criminal histories going back 5 years. In 2003, ARJIS worked on developing an officer notification alert system to let probation officers and domestic violence investigators know when their clients have additional contact with the justice system.

### Violence theory workshop

NIJ enlisted the expertise of a panel of top researchers to create theoretical links between different types of violence and to help shape NIJ's future violence research agenda. The 18 workshop participants were selected for their expert knowledge of violence theory as well as for their creativity and broad vision. The December 2002 workshop featured thought-provoking papers and followup discussions. Conclusions and findings from the workshop helped guide the resulting NIJ research agenda for 2003 and will be the centerpiece of a followup workshop of practitioners and policymakers in 2004.

### For more information:

- A summary of the workshop can be found on NIJ's Violence Against Women and Family Violence program Web page at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/vawprog/theory.html>.

### Prison rape

In passing the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003, Congress established a goal of making rape prevention a top priority in all of the Nation's prisons and establishing a zero tolerance policy toward the incidence of prison rape. In support of the Act, NIJ funded research in 2003 that will glean as much information as possible about the incidence of prison rape and the attitudes toward it among inmates and corrections officers. Who are the perpetrators? Who are the victims? Why are particular victims targeted? How do newer inmates assimilate the prison culture regarding rape? By tapping into prison attitudes and culture toward rape, the study will lay the groundwork for establishing policies and procedures to prevent rape and to target perpetrators.

### Elder fraud

The Nation's growing population of elderly citizens is often vulnerable to fraudulent activities by unscrupulous organizations and individuals. Congress passed the Protecting Seniors From Fraud Act to prevent these types of crimes, in part by educating senior citizens about fraud so that they're less susceptible to becoming victims. The Act directed the Attorney General to conduct a study on such crimes to assist in the

development of new strategies that will prevent and reduce the incidence of elder fraud.

In response to this mandate, NIJ funded two studies in 2003 to assess the magnitude and nature of fraud against seniors, the risk factors associated with

the defrauding of seniors, the manner in which Federal and State justice systems respond to these crimes, the effectiveness of damage awards and other forms of victim reimbursement, and effective ways to prevent or reduce the occurrence of such crimes against seniors.